

Amendments To The Claims

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application.

LISTING OF CLAIMS

1-8 (cancelled)

9. (currently amended) A method for protecting a surface of a porous ceramic body, comprising the steps of:

applying to the surface a slurry composition comprising:

- a binding agent;
- a ceramic material different from the material of the ceramic body;
- at least one boron containing compound;
- solvent; and

impregnating the slurry into the pores of the ceramic body wherein the method produces a porous ceramic body stable to higher temperatures than a porous ceramic body produced without the at least one boron containing compound.

10. (original) A method according to claim 9, wherein the binding agent comprises silica particles.

11. (original) A method according to claim 9, wherein the solvent comprises water.

12. (original) A method according to claim 9, wherein the ceramic material comprises cordierite.

13. (original) A method according to claim 9, further comprising the steps of:
drying the slurry in the pores of the ceramic body; and
firing the dried slurry in the pores.

14. (original) A method according to claim 9, wherein the ceramic body is provided in the form of a tile.

15-19. (cancelled)

20-25. (cancelled)

26. (previously presented) A method for producing a surface protected ceramic body, comprising:

impregnating a slurry into the pores of a ceramic body; and

drying the slurry in the pores of the ceramic body to produce the surface protected ceramic body;

wherein the slurry comprises a boron-containing compound and further comprises a binding agent, a ceramic material different from the material of the ceramic body, and a solvent, wherein the surface protected ceramic body can be heated to 2500°F for 20 hours without cracking.

27. (previously presented) A method according to claim 26, wherein the binding agent comprises silica and the solvent comprises water.

28. (previously presented) A method according to claim 26, wherein the ceramic material comprises cordierite.

29. (previously presented) A method according to claim 26, further comprising firing the dried slurry in the pores.

30. (previously presented) A method according to claim 26, wherein the drying step comprises directing a surface heating source against the surface of the ceramic body.

31. (previously presented) A method according to claim 26, wherein the drying step comprises heating the entire ceramic body.

32. (previously presented) A method according to claim 29, wherein the firing step comprises directing a surface heating source against the surface.

33. (previously presented) A method according to claim 29, wherein the firing step comprises heating the entire ceramic body.

34. (new) A method according to claim 9, wherein the boron containing compound comprises boron carbide.

35. (new) A method according to claim 26, wherein the boron containing compound comprises boron carbide.

36. (new) A method of preparing a surface hardened porous ceramic body comprising:
applying an aqueous slurry comprising boron carbide to the surface of the ceramic body
impregnating the slurry into the pores of the ceramic
drying the slurry in the pores of the ceramic body, and
firing the dried slurry in the pores.

37. (new) A method according to claim 36, wherein the aqueous slurry comprises boron carbide, a binding agent, a ceramic materials different from the material of the ceramic body, and water.

38. (new) A method according to claim 37, wherein the aqueous slurry comprises cordierite.

39. (new) A method according to claim 36, wherein the porous ceramic body is provided in the form of a tile.

40. (new) A method according to claim 37, wherein the method produces a porous ceramic body stable to higher temperatures than a porous ceramic body produced without via at least one boron containing compound.